Symbolism “The Scarlet Ibis”

Symbolism is used in writing to offer another layer of meaning to the text. By using symbols in their writing, authors can add to the mood or theme by simply placing the story in a particular setting, giving character or place a particular name or by having character perform certain actions. For example, the dove has traditionally been used to symbolize peace. If an author wants to emphasis the importance of peace in a section of writing or a story, they may include a dove somewhere in their writing.

**Can be used as symbols in writing;**

1. Names
2. Objects
3. Colours
4. Actions

**Example;** *After years of fighting and killing, the two armies*

*met on a battle scared field to talk about a truce. As*

*the two leaders shook hands, a small white* ***dove*** *could*

*be seen in the sky.*

Suggestions for identifying literary symbols;

1. The story provides a clue that a particular detail is a symbol, either through emphasis, repetition or position.
2. A symbol must be supported by the entire context of the story. ie: Stick figures of children in the **“Blair Witch Project”** symbolize the death of local kids at the hands of a “psycho”.
3. To be called a symbol, an item must suggest a meaning different from its literal meaning. ie: doves symbolize peace or love, not just fat white birds.🕊🕊

Symbolism—“The Scarlet Ibis” by James Hurt

1. Pre-reading:

Before reading the story, answer the following questions.

1. Examine the title of the story. What colour is “scarlet”? What is an “ibis”?
2. This story is set in the southern United States around the time of World War I. List at least 10 things you know about this time and place.
3. Read the story “The Scarlet Ibis” by James Hurst for general understanding.
4. Reread the story “The Scarlet Ibis” by James Hurst as many times as necessary, and as you read, answer the following questions:
5. Does the narrator use “I” in telling this story? From what point of view is the story told?
6. Who are the two main characters in the story?
7. Describe Brother (the narrator). List at least 10 characteristics. You may talk about his appearance, attitude, feelings, traits, desires, etc.
8. Describe Doodle. List at least 10 characteristics. You may talk about his appearance, attitude, feelings, traits, desires, etc.
9. Describe the Scarlet Ibis. You need at least 3 characteristics.
10. What is the climax of the story? Why do you think this is the climax?
11. After reading:

When you have finished and completely understood the story, answer the following:

1. The author has said that the setting acts as another “character” in the story. Why is the setting so important?
2. Give two examples of foreshadowing in the story.
3. Re-read the descriptions of the deaths of the ibis and Doodle. Draw a Venn Diagram and list 5 things they have in common, and 5 things in each of the “difference” areas (a total of 15 items).
4. In the table below, write what symbol is being expressed in each passage, and explain its meaning in a minimum of two sentences (the first one is done for you)

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| **Story Passage** | **Symbol** | **Meaning** |
| That winter we didn’t make much progress, for I was in school and Doodle suffered from one bad cold after another. But when spring came, rich and warm, we raised our sights again. (7) | Spring | Spring is symbolic of rebirth and new beginnings. Brother and Doodle are feeling optimistic about re-starting work toward their goals. |
| When Peter was ready to go to sleep, the peacock spread his magnificent tail, enfolding the boy gently like a closing go-to-sleep flower, burying him in the gloriously iridescent, rustling vortex. (6) |  |  |
| At that moment, the bird began to flutter, but the wings were uncoordinated […]  Sadly, we all looked back at the bird. A scarlet ibis! How many miles had it traveled to die like this, in our yard, beneath the bleeding tree. (9-10) |  |  |
| Finally I went back and found him huddled beneath a red nightshade bush beside the road. He was sitting on the ground, his face buried in his arms, which were resting on his drawn-up knees. (12) |  |  |
| Even death did not mar its grace, for it lay on the earth like a broken vase of red flowers, and we stood around it, awed by its exotic beauty. (9) |  |  |

1. What does the colour scarlet symbolize in this story?
2. What does the ibis represent (symbolize) in this story?